# **Chapter 1: Introduction**

In Massachusetts at the close of the nineteenth century, the momentum of labor reform, urban improvement, social welfare, and the early environmental movement was strongly influencing the ways in which public lands were being managed in the Commonwealth. Theories regarding the connections between public health and access to open space were beginning to have tangible results that were particularly evident in the development of dozens of roads on state lands, including the metropolitan Boston parkway system, between 1893 and 1956. This recreation and transportation system is a highly significant part of the history of the Commonwealth that carries with it an urban, recreational, and transportation planning legacy that goes far beyond the boundaries of the state.

Despite this significance, pressures dating primarily from the second half of the twentieth century such as suburban development, population growth, greatly increased traffic volumes, and lack of maintenance funding for the Massachusetts parkways have all put enormous strains on the system. As a result, the primary function of those parkways in the metropolitan Boston area have changed from being recreational resources to acting as commuter corridors, while those found elsewhere in the state suffer from lack of maintenance and capital improvement funds. The pressures over the last half-century have put the parkways at risk, as incremental and catastrophic changes threaten to destroy their historic integrity.

In 2001, two years prior to the consolidation of the Metropolitan District Commission and the Department of Environmental Management into the Department of Conservation and Recreation (under the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs), the state recognized the significance of these resources and established, in conjunction with the Massachusetts Highway Department, the Historic Parkways Initiative (HPI), an interagency effort aimed at developing an integrated, collaborative planning approach in the development of safe and historically appropriate protection and management policies for the state's historic parkways. The same year, the Massachusetts Historical Commission began to nominate the Metropolitan Park System of greater Boston, with special emphasis on its parkways, to the National Register of Historic Places. Currently, 70 of the parkways in the metropolitan Boston are listed on the National Register of Historic Places either individually or as contributing features to other nominations. With 162 miles of parkways in over 20,000 acres of parkland in the metro Boston area alone, these nominations have established beyond any doubt the incredible significance of these historic resources.

In 2002, the HPI partnered with MIT, the City of Cambridge, and NSTAR to develop the Memorial Drive Demonstration Project with the aim of preserving and adapting a nineteenth century parkway to the demands of the present day. The following year, the HPI produced the Mount Greylock Historic Parkway Rehabilitation Project in partnership with various state agencies as well as the Berkshire Regional Planning Committee and the Mount Greylock Advisory Council. This effort aimed to restore the grandeur of the Civilian Conservation Corps-era road, while providing a safe route of travel for car, pedestrians, and bicycles.

These parkway treatment guidelines are the next step in determining the HPI process for managing these resources throughout the Commonwealth. They outline a replicable procedure for the research,

documentation, planning, treatment, and future maintenance of historic parkways. The guidelines demonstrate that specific characteristics and conditions call for parkway-specific solutions to preserve and strengthen those elements that contribute to the significance and character of each parkway. In addition, this manual should be used in concert with MassHighway's *Project Development and Design Guide*, developed in 2006.

The goals of these guidelines are to:

- Develop a consistent collaborative approach to the planning, treatment, and maintenance of historic parkways and park roads
- Provide a framework for decision making that balances the scenic, cultural and recreational values with the need to provide safe and efficient travel
- Raise and sustain awareness of the historical significance of the Commonwealth's parkways and park roads

# **Guiding Principles**

The following principles have guided the development of this manual:

### A parkway is not a road, but a park with a road in it.

Parkways are first and foremost recreational resources enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of users daily. The earliest parkways were developed to create "ribbons of green" to connect the open space and to provide recreational travel ways within the parks and reservation system. Built on parkland, parkways and park roads are protected by Article 97 of the State Constitution, which safeguards "the natural, scenic, historic, and esthetic qualities" of public lands. Today the parkways serve multiple recreational users, including drivers, walkers, runners and cyclists. Safety and enjoyment of these resources are paramount in the consideration of all capital improvements and on-going care.

# Parkways are historic resources.

Parkways are artifacts that reflect important changes in American culture. While their origins are in the social improvement efforts of the late nineteenth century, parkways continued to be developed

into the 1950s to provide improved and efficient access to the Commonwealth's parks and open space. Recognized by the Massachusetts Historical Commission as historically significant, most parkways are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. A thorough understanding of the original design intent, historic integrity and character will help to guide decision-making.

# Parkway planning and preservation can only be successfully achieved through a multi-disciplinary approach



Fellsway East in Malden

By their nature parkways are complex designed and engineered systems made up of structures, vegetation, lighting, drainage, signage and other roadway related features. Addressing the larger picture (or

context) through collaboration among preservation and engineering professionals is essential to the parkway design process. Throughout the process, involving the expertise of all disciplines, along with timely public input, will ensure the best outcome possible.

# **Parkway Definition and Classification**

Parkways in Massachusetts differ from ordinary state highways in that they are understood to be within a park or park-like setting; and are distinguished by their scenic and landscape qualities or by their access to such qualities. They are limited-access roads whose primary use is not commercial but recreational, generally allowing only personal vehicles except on short, posted sections. They can be as



A Parkway is not a road, but a park with a road in it. Park Drive in Boston.

simple as a single-lane dirt road within a rural state reservation, or as complex as a four-lane, Olmsted-designed and tree-lined parkway in Boston. Today, over 70 urban parkways of metropolitan Boston alone are a major historic resource containing 500 lane miles, 445 crosswalks, 187 bridges, 5000 catch basins, 500 signs, and 12,800 streetlights. Other parkways across the state lie wholly within large expanses of parkland and generally carry only recreational traffic of parkland visitors.

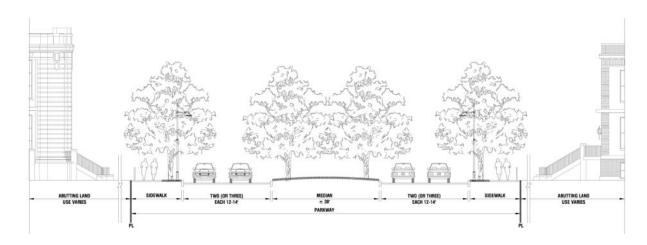
In 2002, an inventory of 42 representative parkways and park roads across the state was conducted to provide a more in-depth understanding of the resource. The inventory documented historic integrity, landscape character, physical conditions, function and use. The inventory fieldwork coupled with the historical research conducted for the preparation of the National Register nominations led to a better appreciation of parkway types, character-defining features and preservation needs.

The following typology of parkways types was created as a tool to assist in determining the appropriate treatment. All DCR parkways can be categorized as one of the three primary types, and many parkways can be further defined as one of five subtypes:

Parkway Types Connecting Parkways Internal Park Roads Park Border Roads Parkway Subtypes River Parkways Ocean Parkways Summit Roads Estate Roads Vernacular Roads.

# **Connecting Parkways**

Connecting Parkways link communities to public parks and reservations, and link parks and reservations to each other. Traveling through varied settings of dense urban neighborhoods and nearly suburban areas, these parkways are the most physically complex in the system.

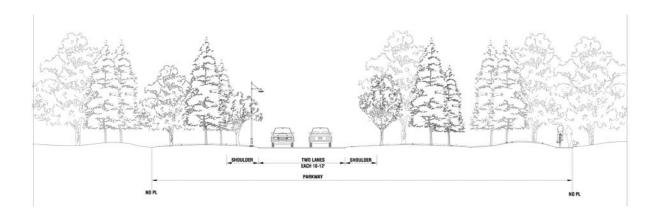


The roadway has four to six travel lanes with widths of 12 to 14 feet. A wide median, often planted with trees, usually occupies the center of the parkway. The outside edges are characterized by vertical granite or quarter-round concrete curbing. Beyond the curbing, turf, trees and adjacent sidewalk usually define the outside edge. Character–defining features include, but are not limited to, routes that connect to a public reservation or to other parkways; wide planted medians; rights of way that support a park-like setting, and curvilinear alignments. The VFW Parkway, for example that connects the Charles River Reservation with the West Roxbury Parkway.



The V.F.W. Parkway is a Connecting Parkway.

**Internal Park Roads** are the primary circulation system within parks, providing access to recreational sites such as picnic areas, trailheads, and overlooks. Their alignments generally follow the natural topography and are often more curvilinear, with greater changes in vertical alignment than other parkways.

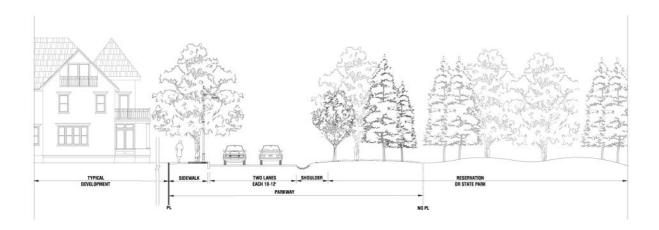


The setting around Internal Park Roads is most often wooded with occasional breaks in the forest, often at overlooks, that provide views to park features or the surrounding area. The roadway consists of two 10 to 12-foot-wide travel lanes with little development along the edges beyond drainage features such as swales, culverts and headwalls, and retaining walls which are often more abundant due to excessive changes in topography. Barriers, boulders, guardwalls and guardrails may also be found. In addition, due to the accessibility of natural features, trailheads, and viewsheds along Internal Park Roads, unofficial pullouts are often found along their edges. Chickatawbut Road is an Internal Park Road within the Blue Hills Reservation.



Internal Park Road at Bradley Palmer State Park, Topsfield.

**Border Roads** historically form the edges of parks to ensure accessibility to public land. They are chiefly defined by the presence of protected open space on one side of the parkway and private, usually 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century residential development on the other, although some Border Roads are now found within park interiors due to subsequent adjacent land acquisitions.

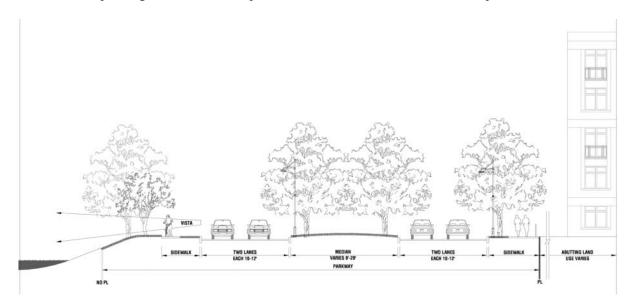


The land on the park-side of the roadway is similar to that found on Internal Park Roads, and is usually flanked by forest or clearings with minimally-developed edges. The non-reservation side, however, is often detailed with curbs, planting strips with trees, and sidewalks. Historic vertical granite curbing may be found, though it is often replaced with quarter-round concrete curbing. Two, undivided 10 to 12 feet wide travel lanes typically define the roadway. An example of a Border Road is Hillcrest Parkway which marks the boundary between Middlesex Fells and adjacent private land.



# **Parkway Subtypes**

**River Parkways** follow one side of a watercourse in a generally level, curvilinear alignment that parallels the shoreline. The riverine side of the roadway is generally riparian or a thin strip of developed parkland with a landscaped edge contrasted with private residential or commercial development on the other.

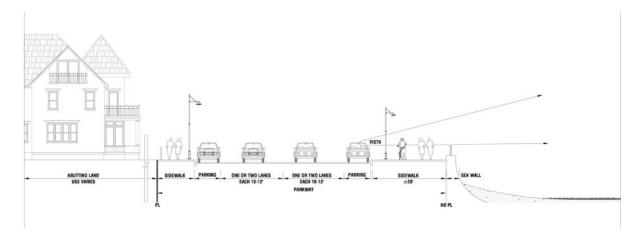


A River Parkway may contain both broad and screened views of the river, large structures including culverts and bridges, vertical granite and quarter-round curbing, and a number of barrier types including the common "Boston Pattern" railings. "The cross-section of a river parkway...varies from that similar to a connecting parkway to that of a border road or internal park road. This is the most versatile of the parkway subtypes. A single parkway can resemble different subtypes, depending on the character of the area it travels through." Running along the north bank of the Charles River, Memorial Drive is the quintessential River Parkway.



Cambridge Parkway extends Memorial Drive along the East Cambridge edge of the Charles River.

**Ocean Parkways** are located exclusively along the ocean and follow the horizontal alignment of the shoreline. Expansive views of the water, inland marshes, and at times, the Boston skyline can always be seen from these parkways.



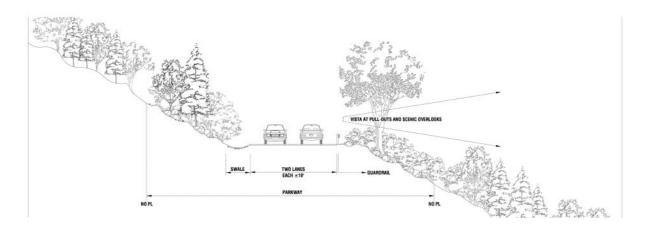
Sections of Ocean Parkways adjacent to inland marshes may serve as berms and may contain tidegates. Adjacent inland land use is typically 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century residential and commercial, while the ocean or beaches always occupy the opposite side. The roadway is typically two to four lanes with no median, but with adjacent parking, vertical granite or quarter-round curbing, and wide sidewalks or promenades. An Ocean Parkway always contains a seawall that may also have barriers, such as Boston Pattern railing on the top. Revere Beach Parkway is an example of an Ocean Parkway.



Lynn Shore Drive in 1907 and nearly a century later.



**Summit Roads** are parkways that wind up steep mountain slopes in a series of ascents, with rests at pullouts at overlooks. This unique parkway type provides an experience of rugged progress up steep, winding topography, with dramatic views on the way to the summit. Once there, a formal sense of arrival may highlight buildings, structures, overlooks and other recreational facilities found at the top.

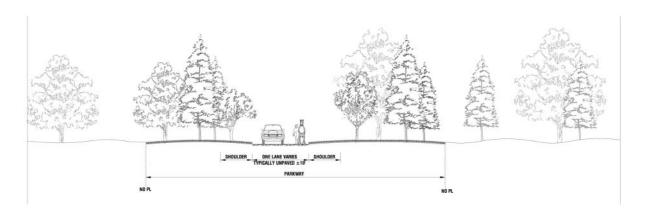


Dramatic long distance views are paramount to this parkway type. Roadways are typically narrow with two lanes approximately ten feet wide and flanked by steep slopes on the upslope and steep dropoffs on the downslope side. Drainage features are numerous due to the varied topography and include swales, drop inlets, headwalls, and culverts on the upslope side and outlets on the downslope. Summit Road climbs Mount Sugarloaf and is typical of this parkway type.



Summit Road at Mount Sugarloaf State Reservation in South Deerfield.

**Estate Roads** were designed to serve private grounds, and have been adapted for use in estates-turned-parks. These roads typically begin at a formal entry or gateway and flow through formalized landscapes that create a sense of arrival.



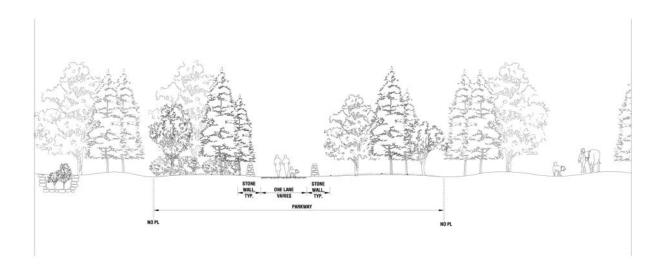
Estate Roads are typically one lane, approximately ten feet wide, travel over fairly level topography, and contain few if any features. The roads at Maudslay State Park remain from the site's former use as a private estate.





The narrow Estate Road at Maudslay State Park, Newburyport, crosses a stone bridge on its way through the landscaped grounds, and that at F. Gilbert Hills State Forest in Foxboro borders magnificent rhododendrons.

**Vernacular Roads** are a type of historic road found in virtually all forests, parks and reservations in the Commonwealth, but typically run through undeveloped areas.



Although their characteristics vary widely, Vernacular Roads are often unpaved or paved single-lane routes with adjacent stone walls and little if any infrastructure. The former town and utility roads in Dubuque State Forest are Vernacular Roads.



Mill Street in F. Gilbert Hills State Forest in Foxboro is a country road separating cleared land from forest and lined by old stone walls that date from early European settlement.

### **How to Use These Guidelines**

These guidelines steer parkway development through a systematic and repeatable process of research, planning, and stewardship which aims to create a multidisciplinary working environment that will appropriately care for parkways and plan for their future.

The following summarizes the information found in each chapter:

**Chapter One: Introduction** describes the background for this manual, its guiding principles guiding and a typology for the parkways.

**Chapter Two: Parkway Planning and Project Management** describes the management and design process needed to treat a parkway, centered on the Design Control Report.

**Chapter Three: Guidelines** summarizes the parameters by feature-type that parkway project managers should work within when altering a parkway.

**Chapter Four: Maintenance** summarizes routine maintenance issues and outlines the distinction between maintenance and other projects that may require review.

**The Appendices** include supplemental guidelines applicable to only one parkway type or subtype, a brief history of the parkways, threats and issues, summaries of the Historic Parkways Initiative and the National Register process, case studies, an inventory of urban parkways, outreach process, and references and resource information that will support on-going efforts to protect and enhance the Commonwealth's historic parkways.

This manual is intended to be used in conjunction with several other key references that are applicable to parkways:

- MassHighway, Project Development and Design Guide (2006) http://www.vhb.com/mhd\_GuideBook.asp
- Flexibility in Highway Design, Federal Highway Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation, 1997
- The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes, Washington, D.C., 1996

The historic parkway system of Massachusetts is the oldest of its kind in the country and a unique resource whose care and planning requires careful research and evaluation. The following guidelines are the first comprehensive parkway guidelines in the country and will hopefully serve as a model for other states and municipalities in future efforts to protect these unique historic resources whose significance and use is still relevant today.